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SUBJECT: "OTHER RUSSIA" STAND-OFF WITH NIZHNIY NOVGOROD
AUTHORITIES OVER MARCH CONTINUES

REF: A. 06 MOSCOW 12981

[¶](#)B. ST. PETERSBURG 50

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Summary

[¶](#)1. (SBU) "Other Russia's" plans to stage the third in its series of marches, this time in Nizhniy Novgorod on March 24, appeared March 22 to be bumping up against much the same kind of problems it had encountered in earlier efforts in Moscow and St. Petersburg. This time around, local law enforcement and the city authorities have reportedly confiscated "Other Russia" literature, questioned some of the organizers, organized a conflicting event at the same site, and spread misleading information about the nature of the march. For their part, march organizers have rejected the meeting site offered by the city, allegedly on ideological/esthetic grounds and continue to include in their coalition an organization, Eduard Limonov's National Bolshevik Party, whose guerrilla theater tactics have attracted particular police scrutiny. End summary.

City Overreacts

[¶](#)2. (SBU) "Other Russia's" attempt to stage the third in its "March of Those Who Disagree" series on March 24 in Nizhniy Novgorod seemed, as of March 22, to be getting much the same reception as its two predecessors on March 3 in St. Petersburg and on December 16, 2006, in Moscow (reftels). Representatives of the Department for Combating Extremism confiscated 60 thousand copies of the second edition of a newspaper intended to advertise the march. (At least part of the first edition was distributed without incident.) March organizers have allegedly been told that the examination of the second edition for evidence of extremism would not be completed until after the date of the march.

[¶](#)3. (SBU) Accompanying the confiscation of the newspaper, according to Oksana Chelysheva of the Nizhniy Novgorod Russian-Chechen Friendship Society (RCFS), have been visits to the apartments of march organizers, questioning of the director of the company who printed the newspaper and its publishers, and of the Kommersant Nizhniy Novgorod journalist who wrote articles about march-related events. Chelysheva

reported that RCFS offices are being watched by uniformed police.

¶4. (SBU) It is also alleged that the city administration is attempting to undercut the march by concurrently holding a street carnival, which normally takes place on "city day" in September, and by hurriedly undertaking repair work on the main street of the march's proposed route. Also in the city's bag of tricks, according to media reports, has been advertising alleging that the march is to be undertaken in defense of homosexuals.

March Organizers
Reject Compromise
on "Moral Grounds"

¶5. (SBU) According to Chelysheva and to media reports, the city had attempted to accommodate the March in negotiations preceding the current controversy. During the course of that conversation, according to Chelysheva, Deputy Mayor Gladyshev, noted that the proposed route would take marchers through the city's commercial, pedestrian area, and he worried about possible damage. He told organizers he would like impose a blanket ban on all rallies in the pedestrian area. The City Administration offered march organizers an opportunity to stage its event on Lenin Square one of the city's gathering points. The organizers refused on "moral grounds." Mayor Vadim Bulavinov described the "no" as a "provocation, designed to make march organizers seem like martyrs." The organizers' appeal of the city's decision was rejected by the Nizhniy Novgorod district court on late afternoon, March 22.

Comment

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¶6. (SBU) As was the case in St. Petersburg and, to a lesser extent, Moscow, the Nizhniy Novgorod event features overreaction by the city authorities and an unwillingness to compromise on the part of the march's organizers. Press reports suggest that the City Administration is unnerved, above all by Eduard Limonov's National Bolshevik Party. Nizhniy Communist Party local deputy Nikolay Ryabov told the local press that he has been fined only twice when he has staged rallies in the city. On both occasions, it was when he invited the National Bolsheviks to participate. The presence of Limonov's organization in "Other Russia" has caused a number of politicians and organizations --among them the Yabloko national organization-- to refrain from affiliating themselves with "Other Russia." Events like the March 15 detention of National Bolsheviks for their possible role in explosions at Moscow State University will likely only reinforce the tendency of some to distance themselves from "Other Russia"-sponsored activities, and the proclivity of some authorities to take a harder line.

BURNS